REMARKS

Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for participating in the case interview conducted on November 20, 2007. During the interview, Applicants argued that the cited combination fails to disclose or suggest, "a unit for determining that a problem occurs during the search processing when the input number measured at the end of the search processing exceeds a predetermined threshold value" or "a unit for determining that a problem occurs during the search processing when the necessary time measured at the end of the search processing exceeds a predetermined threshold value." The Examiner informed Applicants that he would review the references more carefully and act accordingly.

Claims 1, 2, 6, 7, and 11-15 have been amended. Support for the claim amendments can be located on page 8, lines 10-14 of the specification. New claims 16 and 17 have been added. Claims 1-17 are currently pending.

Applicants have amended claims 11 and 12. Therefore, withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

In response to the Examiner's statement regarding claims 1, 6, and 15 comprising "software *per se*," Applicants respectfully submit that the allegation is without merit. In particular, a "unit for measuring an input number of search conditions. . .," that is, a "search condition input number measuring part" can be hardware. *See* specification of the present application, FIG. 1. Therefore, the claims recite statutory subject matter. Moreover, "dictionary.com" defines a unit as, "a machine, part, or system of machines having a specified purpose." Therefore, the claims are included within the statutory "machine" class. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Applicants have amended claims 2 and 7. Therefore, withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112 is respectfully requested.

On page 4 of the Office Action, claims 1-3, 5-8, and 10-15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,587,847 B1 (Stier).

Stier is directed to an entity's operational performance and involves monitoring use of its knowledge by measuring use of a knowledge base storing its knowledge and monitoring knowledge that it generates by evaluating knowledge quality and efficiency of its generation. According to Stier, when an agent recognizes that her query represents missing, incorrect, or

incomplete knowledge in the knowledge base, before saving the interaction, she may create a memo outlining the problem with the knowledge base and suggesting the knowledge that should be added to the knowledge base.

Applicants respectfully submit that independent claims 1, 6, and 11-15 are patentable over Stier, as Stier fails to disclose, "a unit for determining that a problem occurs during the search processing when the input number measured at the end of the search processing exceeds a predetermined threshold value" or "a unit for determining that a problem occurs during the search processing when the necessary time measured at the end of the search processing exceeds a predetermined threshold value," as recited in independent claims 1 and 6, respectively, for example.

Column 8, lines 56-61 of Stier simply describes that, "when the agent 13 discovers a problem, the agent 13 creates know-how information. Thus, in Stier, the person who discovers the problem is a user, that is, the agent 13.

In contrast, in the present invention, a database search system automatically detects the occurrence of a problem based on the input number of search conditions or the necessary time taken from a start to an end of search processing. More specifically, in the case where the input number or the necessary time exceeds a predetermined threshold value, the DB search system determines that a problem occurs. Upon determining that a problem occurs, the database search system receives an input of a message describing know-how information regarding the problem from the user.

Thus, in the present invention, the database search system automatically detects the occurrence of a problem based on the input number of search conditions or the necessary time taken from a start to an end of search processing. In contrast to Stier, in the present invention, the problem that know-how information is not recorded as a result of a user not locating an important problem (page 4, lines 31-32 of the present specification), for example, and the problem that an operation burden on a user may be excessive (page 5, lines 4-5 of the present specification) can be solved.

In light of the foregoing, independent claims 1, 6, and 11-15 are patentable over the reference. As dependent claims 2-3, 5, 7-8, 10, and 16-17 depend from respective independent claims, the dependent claims are patentable over the reference for at least the reasons presented for the independent claims.

As Birkhoelzer adds no relevant information to Stier, claims 4 and 9 are patentable over the references for at least the reasons presented above.

If there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

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